



Sleep Management and Soldier Readiness: A Guide for Leaders and Soldiers

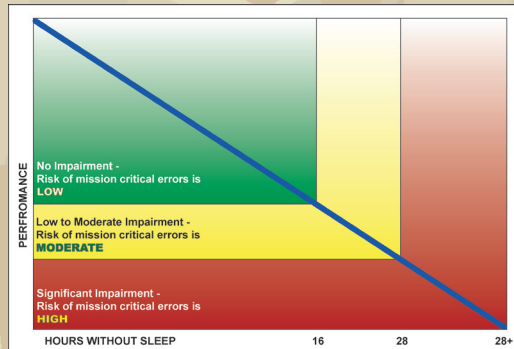


Like food, water, and air—sleep is a necessity. When we don't get enough sleep, our performance suffers and we put both ourselves and our fellow Soldiers at risk. We react slower, it's harder to stay focused, it's harder to think, and we get stressed more easily. We make more mistakes and make poor decisions and judgments. To make matters worse, the effects of sleep deprivation sneak up on us. In other words, when we don't have enough sleep, we are not good judges of the impact that sleep deprivation is having on our abilities and performance.

A sleep deprived Soldier might fall asleep at the wheel and cause a vehicle roll-over. A sleep deprived Soldier might administer the wrong dose of medicines. A sleep deprived Soldier on guard duty might not notice a threat or might react too slowly to it. A sleep deprived Soldier might transpose digits while entering coordinates into a fire-control system. More generally, a sleep deprived Soldier might make wrong tactical decisions. The bottom line is that sleep deprivation can get Soldiers killed!

Sleep Deprivation and Performance

This chart shows the relationship between sleep deprivation and performance. You can use this chart to gauge your sleep status or the sleep status of your Soldiers. Essentially, the longer we go without sleep, the poorer our performance on any number of tasks. In general, we can



sustain normal performance without noticeable impairment (the Green zone) for about 16 hours after waking up. After 16 hours without sleep, we begin to see a noticeable decrease in our performance (the Amber zone). By the time we have been awake for 24 hours, our reaction time is worse than if we were legally intoxicated. After 28 hours without sleep, our performance becomes significantly impaired with the likelihood of critical errors rising to an unacceptable level (the Red zone).

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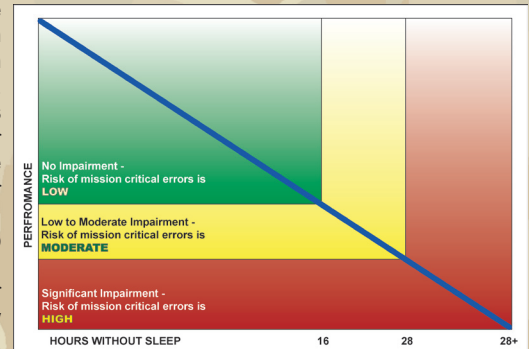


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Sleep Management

To sustain performance over the long haul, you and your Soldiers need at least 6 and preferably 7-8 hours of sleep out of every 24. Less sleep than this and Soldier performance will degrade over time. Getting 4-6 hours of sleep every 24 hours will keep Soldiers in the Amber zone (where the risk for mission critical errors is increased but still at acceptable levels) for periods of up to several weeks. Getting less than 4 hours of sleep will keep Soldiers in the Red Zone (where the risk for mission critical errors is unacceptably high). Sleep doesn't have to be continuous to be effective. While it is preferable to give Soldiers uninterrupted sleep time, several shorter sleep periods that add up to between 6 and 8 hours will likely be adequate.

Tips for Sleep Management

- Tips for Soldiers
 - Don't sleep in areas where there is regular activity;
 - When sleeping, minimize exposure to noise and light - wear ear plugs and use blackout shades;
 - Avoid over-the-counter "sleep aids," – they cause grogginess but not actual sleep;
 - Sleep whenever you can – even a little sleep is better than none, and several "catnaps" can add-up quickly.
- Tips for Leaders
 - Develop a unit sleep management program that gives Soldiers at least 6 and preferably 7-8 hours to sleep out of every 24;
 - Soldiers trying to sleep during the day require longer (or more frequent) opportunities to sleep to compensate for the body's normal reaction to sleep cycle disruption;
 - Never put your soldiers in a position where they must choose between sleep and something else they would enjoy;
 - Arrange sleep schedules that give Soldiers opportunities to sleep at a consistent time;
- Remember...
 - Your performance begins to suffer as soon as you start losing sleep;
 - If you are struggling to stay awake, then your ability to function is already impaired.
- If Sleep Loss Can't be Avoided...
 - Use caffeine – drink the equivalent of two cups of coffee (~200 mg of caffeine) every 2 to 4 hours;
 - Caffeine use as described above will help maintain performance even in the face of moderate sleep loss.

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